

## Antecedents and Consequences of Consumer Engagement with Food Influencers from Social Media

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History:</b> Received: 30 Sep 2024 Revised: 19 Nov 2024 Accepted: 02 Dec 2024 Available Online: 19 Dec 2024</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.56536/ijmres.v14i4.708">https://doi.org/10.56536/ijmres.v14i4.708</a></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Social media influencer, Perceived enjoyment, Professionalism, Credibility, Behavioral intention</p> <p><b>JEL Classification:</b> M15, M37</p>	<p>In today's marketing landscape, social media influencers influence consumer perceptions, emotions, and purchasing decisions. This study seeks to delve into how the attributes of food influencers, such as perceived enjoyment, professionalism, and credibility, impact consumer engagement and behavioral intentions towards food products. The current study employed an empirical design, utilizing an online questionnaire survey. 386 participants took part in the survey, yielding 298 valid responses. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to evaluate the hypotheses. The survey results indicate that perceived enjoyment and perceived professionalism significantly impact engagement with influencers, which, in turn, positively influences behavioral intentions. Additionally, perceived credibility did not affect the followers' behavioral intentions. This study adds to the understanding of food influencers, exploring how consumer engagement with food influences their behavioral intentions. Specifically, food influencers' personality attributes have not been thoroughly examined in the context of food influencer behavior until now. This research employs the principles of uses and gratification theory to shed light on this previously unexplored area. This study explains that food influencers must try to engage consumers emotionally with professional content to influence purchase intentions emotionally.</p>

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## INTRODUCTION

Individuals who disseminate comprehensive instructional content about food, particularly those who exhibit a pronounced interest in gourmet cuisine, considered food influencers. The proliferation of social media platforms has paralleled by increased internet usage, leading to the emergence of food influencers globally. These influencers play a pivotal role in disseminating information regarding food brands, significantly impacting consumer behavior and intentions toward purchasing decisions (Shahid et al., 2023). Consumers perceive food influencers as valuable resources, attributing this perception to the informative content they provide, which not only broadens consumers' knowledge but also facilitates more informed purchasing choices (Mariani, 2020).

The increase of social media utilization has enabled food influencers to critically evaluate and discuss products related to food critically, thereby extending their reach to a broader audience and exerting a considerable influence on consumer purchasing behaviors (Mariani, 2020; Wang, 2011).

Previous studies have effectively shown the link between engaged followers, influencer trust, and their intention to buy the products they promote (Luong & Ho, 2023). Researchers have not explored the role of food influencers in promoting food brands (Cosenza et al., 2015; McDonnell, 2016), their impact on consumer behavior, and their potential for partnerships with the food industry (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). This research seeks to enhance the comprehension of the impact that engagement with influencers' content has on followers' subsequent actions. It analyses the determinants of involvement and its potential impact on food tasting and dining experiences.

This study examined how customers' perceptions of food influencers' usefulness affected their attitudes and desire to purchase food-related goods and services. Social media food influencers want to be effective in every aspect of the lives of their target audience. A few examples are using their influence to change food consumption, lifestyle decisions, and even the language and habits of a target audience. Other examples include influencing individuals to purchase or utilize a specific product or service.

Food Influencer marketing has influenced customer behavior. Food Influencer marketing has used by about 70% of Western businesses, and its projected market size in 2020 is \$9.7 billion (up from \$1.7 billion in 2016). 55% of Instagram users follow at least one famous food advocate, for instance. (Willers & Schmidt, 2017). The percentage of daily active consumers on Instagram who purchase items based on recommendations from food influencers is estimated to be 42%. Similarly, 23% of daily users on Facebook have already made purchases based on recommendations from bloggers or food influencers. Although early social media influencers tended to concentrate on food influencers, in recent times, the focus has evolved and extended to involve food items.

Social media influencers influence the food sector by setting trends for marketing various products and sharing their food experiences through posts on social media. Social media allows food influencers to engage directly with their followers through live Q&A sessions and polls. These interactions can influence consumers' food choices (Coates et al., 2019). Food influencers create different contacts to engage with their followers. There has been limited research on these aspects that contribute to shaping new trends (Tran, 2023). More research and investigations are needed to understand food influencers' role better. These interactions increase consumer awareness, engagement with the food influencer, and behavioral intentions.

RQ1: How do food influencer characteristics (perceived enjoyment, perceived professionalism, perceived credibility) build behavioral intentions toward food brands?

This study explores how perceived enjoyment, professionalism, and credibility increase consumers' engagement with food influencers, resulting in increased behavioral intentions toward food. This research is structured as follows: The next section will discuss the literature review and hypothesis development. Then, the research methodology will be explained, followed by the results and the last section will present the conclusion, policy implications, and limitations and future directions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Food influencers have grown to be well-known figures in the world of social media, influencing people's opinions and behavior around foods, cooking methods, and trends. Studies on the antecedents of this engagement have identified many key factors that are driving consumer connection with food influencers on social media. The influencer's perceived authenticity is a significant antecedent. Developing trust and credibility with their audience primarily depends on the influencer's authenticity, which is their sincerity and honesty. Customers are influenced by active opinion leaders on social media when making selections about what to buy since they frequently use platforms like YouTube and Instagram (Król & Zdonek, 2021; Akram et al., 2023). Food influencers can connect with their audience by sharing personal and relatable material, such as cooking experiences, stories, or behind-the-scenes photos.

The uses and gratifications theory (UGT) helps us figure out why people follow food influencers on social media and how to get people to buy your products. UGT has been extensively employed in the literature to look into why an audience prefers to use particular media (Katz et al., 1973). People may use the same media for different purposes. This research used the uses and gratifications theory (UGT) to examine why people follow social media food influencers, how influencers engage the audience, and their buying decisions. In order to understand why an audience chooses to use a specific media, UGT has been used often in the literature (Phua et al., 2017). As others have observed, social media assist individuals in "passing the time, escaping their daily lives, and participating in activities they deem entertaining" when driven by the pursuit of pleasurable fulfilment (Plume & Slade, 2018). Some people do not have strong opinions when making decisions, so they seek guidance online. However, consumers follow social media influencers for informational needs, expert opinions, and information about different food brands so they can make decisions according to the guidelines of influencers. S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) can be used to examine how various stimuli from food influencers affect their followers' internal states (behavioral or affective), which in turn influences their behavioral responses. In the context of multiple research platforms, the S-O-R approach has recently been extended to investigate how consumer perceptions of interaction across various platforms influence their behavior (Arora et al., 2020; Xin et al., 2022).

## Stimulus

**Perceived Enjoyment:** This indicator gauges the anticipated pleasure or joy individuals anticipate experiencing when engaging with food-related items or figures. Greater perceived enjoyment might result in a heightened level of interest and focus.

**Perceived Professionalism:** This demonstrates how individuals trust the food influencer's expertise, dedication, and understanding of their work. The perception of professionalism can increase their credibility and trustworthiness.

**Perceived Credibility:** This relates to the reliability and trustworthiness of food influencers' data. Increased credibility has a beneficial effect on how viewers see the information.

## Organism

**Engagement with the influencer:** This variable mediates the relationship between the stimuli (independent variables) and response (dependent variable). Engagement may take several forms, including actively following food influencers' material or likes, shares, and feedback on their posts.

## Response

**Behavioral intention:** This includes what people plan to do or think about doing with food, such as experimenting with new recipes, buying suggested products, developing eating habits, or sharing food-related materials.

## Perceived enjoyment

Motivation theorists have examined how motivation affects people's behaviors based on two primary factors: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation shows the focused-on goals aspect of an action, whereas intrinsic motivation focuses on the usefulness of the action. Previous research has shown that extrinsic incentives, like perceived enjoyment, are essential in explaining behavior intentions to use information systems (Magno, 2017; Wang et al., 2010). Perceived enjoyment denotes the favorable, individualized experience obtained from human-computer interaction, irrespective of the efficacy of food influences (Zhang et al., 2012). Regarding food platforms, perceived enjoyment directly influences attitudes and intentions toward technology. Consequently, positive blog experiences foster psychological participation and a sense of community (Magno, 2017; Turel & Serenko, 2012; Lin et al., 2014).

## Perceived professionalism

Perceived Professionalism influences users' opinions and perceptions by expressing video producers' expertise, experience, and skill in a particular field (Liu et al., 2023). Consumers' psychological expectations will be met when the perceived professionalism of short videos creates an environment that makes them want to be there. Food influencers have gained popularity through social media posts, have a large following that respects their opinions and advice, and can influence and guide their followers (Freberg et al., 2011). These individuals could be professionals with

expertise in their field or anyone with the capacity to influence others; they should also regularly upload information and have high interaction rates (More & Lingam, 2019). Food influencers can be identified by looking at their number of followers, engagement rates, post quality, and frequency of sponsored material (Dzhafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Since social media sites like YouTube and Instagram began to grow in popularity in 2006 and 2010, marketers have been aware of the high-impact potential of these users and accounts.

### **Perceived credibility**

The consumer engagement research also assessed credibility, establishing it as a precursor to customer engagement (Halvorsen et al., 2013; Hsu & Tsou, 2011). The perceived credibility of influencers has been shown by Hsu & Tsou (2011) to increase behavior intentions and influencer engagement levels. Credibility is defined as "the degree to which a source is perceived as possessing relevant knowledge about the communication topic and can be trusted to offer an impartial opinion on the subject" (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Food influencers are a great source of information and expertise regarding food (Lee et al., 2014; Ohara et al., 2012). When it comes to eating habits and offering evaluations of food services, they are accommodating (Mbouw & Qonita, 2018; Ohara et al., 2012). Research has shown that well-known social models have an impact on eating habits (Coates et al., 2019; Higgs, 2015; König et al., 2017). Food influencers are beneficial in sharing and promoting food, especially on social media platforms (Hepworth et al., 2019).

### **Engagement with the influencer**

As the internet continues to grow and new digital tools and channels for communication, such as social media and food influencers, are introduced, interest in consumer connection has increased (Marino & Lo Presti, 2018; Thackeray et al., 2008). Users interact with influencers when they use websites (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Engagement with influencers is critical because of the relationship effects, which include loyalty, commitment, trust, and brand attachment (Brodie et al., 2013). According to earlier studies conducted in the context of social media (Smith & Gallicano, 2015; Yang & Kang, 2009) there is a related process of interacting with influencers where awareness of a business's social media activities serves as the starting point (thinking) for online engagement behaviors (like comments and user-generated content behavior intentions).

### **Behavioral Intention**

A person's attitude is directly correlated with how strongly he intends to carry out a behavior; the more firmly he wants to do so, the more likely it is that they will act on it (Kim et al., 2013). The intention to buy and to repurchase can be strongly impact by inaccurate and misleading information that is at odds with what the customer expected. Attitude refers to the degree of support or opposition an individual expresses towards a behavior prior to its execution (Al-Debei et al., 2013). Attitudes, whether affirmative or adverse, affect an individual's drive to engage in a specific behavior. The likelihood of an individual exhibiting a particular behavior can also be ascertain by

it. Positive attitudes consequently enhance the probability that individuals will engage in behaviors they find appealing (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

### **Hypotheses Development**

According to Zhang et al. (2012), perceived enjoyment is the term used to describe the favorable and personal experience that results from the interaction between humans and computers, independent of result. Research reveals that engagement and pleasure with influencers are positively correlated with enjoyment (Magno, 2017; Turel & Serenko, 2012; Shiau & Luo, 2013).

**H1:** Perceived enjoyment influences engagement with the influencer.

A social media influencer's professional material sets them apart from other users, attracts attention, and improves the efficiency of their communications (Casaló et al., 2020). According to Farivar & Wang (2022), users of social media frequently follow a variety of influencers and become overwhelmed with post feeds. According to earlier studies on influencer marketing, followers' opinions about an influencer's opinion leadership can be positively impacted by unique posts (Casaló et al., 2020). Followers show greater interest in an influencer's suggestions for purchases when they think the influencer's postings are distinctive and different.

**H2:** Perceived professionalism influences engagement with the influencer.

A positive link anticipated between influencers' perceived credibility and their followers' engagement level. By engaging with the influencer activities, readers will develop a sentimental bond with it. Even if the topic of food posting is becoming more and more relevant, research in this area has mainly focused on trendsetting and travel influencers (Jang et al., 2021; Mariani et al., 2021; Tan & Chang, 2016; Esteban-Santos et al., 2018).

**H3:** Perceived credibility influences engagement with the influencer.

The complex phenomenon of engagement with social media influencers greatly influences consumer behavior (Din et al., 2012; Sun, 2013). This elevated level of engagement directly impacts the behavioral intentions of followers. Behavioral intention can be characterized by a person's capacity for action or a customer's willingness to employ the process going forward (Venkatesh et al., 2008). The degree of interaction with influencers is expected to impact the audience's behavioral intentions positively.

**H4:** Engagement with the influencer (as a mediating) influence behavioral intention.

This study is particularly interested in the psychological impacts of online golf simulators on intention, perceived value, and enjoyment. First, a user's incentive to encourage using a specific technology is thought to be the basis for reported satisfaction in the environment. Perceived enjoyment gives positive emotions, which directly impact followers' behavioral intentions.

**H5:** Perceived enjoyment influences behavioral intention.

Behavioral intentions are significantly influenced by perceived professionalism. Food influencers can be found by examining data such as follower count, engagement rates, post quality, and frequency of sponsored content (Dzhafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). This continued trust may lead to long-term behavioral intentions, such as following recommended food rules or using items as advised. Influencers who maintain elevated levels of professionalism can effectively develop their authority and reputation.

**H6:** Perceived professionalism influences behavioral intention.

Research indicates a positive association between an influencer's perceived reputation on Instagram and their behavioral intentions. This relationship has been observed in studies conducted by (Sertoglu et al., 2014). Consumers' worldwide intention goes beyond simply liking, commenting, and sharing posts; it also involves following brands and recommending them to others.

**H7:** Perceived credibility influences behavioral intention.

Consumer behavior is significantly influenced by enjoyment (Kim & Hall, 2019). Previous research has demonstrated that interactions with the influencer serve as a connection between travelers' objectives and their perceptions of satisfaction (Zhu et al., 2023). By showing how interaction with influencers mediates these relationships, emphasize this aspect. "Enjoyment" in this study is defined as the degree to which the Instagram and TikTok video material is considered entertaining (Li & Chen, 2019; Liu et al., 2023). The audience finds the visual representations of destinations simply attractive when they discover food videos on TikTok and Instagram to be quite enjoyable (Liu et al., 2023). As a result, when influencers offer high-quality content and consumers find it enjoyable, it enhances their behavioral intention.

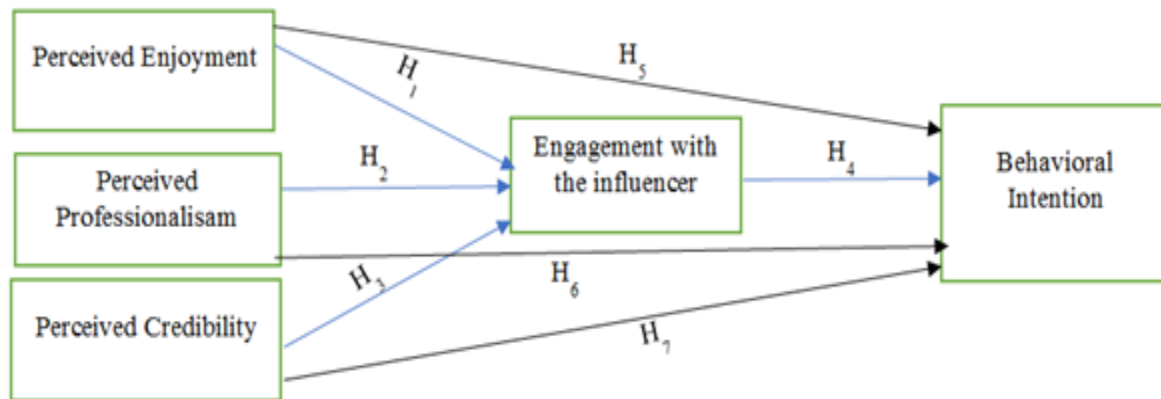
**H8a-** Engagement with the influencer mediates the relationship between Perceived enjoyment and Behavioral intention.

The influencer's engagement serves as a mediator in the interaction between perceived professionalism and behavioral intention. The influencer marketing framework on social media has a favorable impact. Therefore, followers appreciate and defend influencers' postings more for accepting their purchase recommendations when they regard them as more appealing, trustworthy, and having a higher level of self-presence. Deciding what to buy has a significant personal impact because it involves expenditures (Casaló et al., 2020). Influencers can inspire followers to make decisions about what to buy, and these followers can elaborate on their words. As such, there is a high elaboration linked to purchasing decisions. Conversely, social media followers continually overwhelmed with posts from several influencers and are subjected to an extensive array of content. According to Farivar & Wang (2022) people might depend on source variables when deciding if a message is effective. This could be a positive mediating effect of influencer engagement on the association between behavioral intention and perceived professionalism.

**H8b-** Engagement with the influencer mediates the relationship between Perceived Professionalism and Behavioral intention.

**H8c-** The relationship between behavioral intention and perceived credibility is mediated by engagement with the influencer.

### Theoretical Framework



*Figure 1: Theoretical Model* Error! Reference source not found. represented the proposed research model of the present study.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection and Procedure

This study employs an online poll to assess the impact of customer involvement on social media on food influencers. Data was collected through different social media platforms. 386 respondents participated in the survey, and 298 respondents were valid. The research sample was selected using the ten times rule. Two sections of the survey forms were given to the participants. The demographic attributes of the participants were given in the initial section. These characteristics included age, gender, and screening questions. The second section of the survey form asked questions about the study constructs. The responses were evaluated using a seven-point Likert scale.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The table I above demonstrates the respective age distributions of the study participants. Related to age, 83.9% were aged between 18-25 years, 15.4% were aged between 26-33 years, 0.3% were 34-40 years and 0.3% age were above 40 years. Regarding the participants' gender, males were 40.9% and females were 59.1%. Moreover, in this study which comprises 87.9% of the entire sample says “Yes” and 12.1% of the entire study sample says “No.”



The following table represents the demographic profile of the respondents.

**Table I: The Demographic Profile of study participants**

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	18-25	250	83.9
	26-33	46	15.4
	34-40	1	.3
	above 40	1	.3
<b>Gender</b>	Male	121	40.9
	Female	177	59.1
<b>Do you follow any social media food influencers?</b>	Yes	262	87.9
	No	36	12.1

### Measurement model assessment

To evaluate the measurement model, the convergent and discriminant validity of the items were estimated. Regarding the convergent validity, all items had factor loadings above the 0.7 threshold, and the Cronbach's alpha (CA) value for all constructs was between 0.754 and 0.903, which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). Regarding convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged between 0.576 and 0.783, which is greater than the acceptable threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981a). Regarding the constructs' internal consistency, the composite reliability (CR) values ranged between 0.844 and 0.932 meeting (Hair et al., 2019) criteria of above than 0.7.

**Table II: Presents the scale items and measurement model output**

Construct	Items	Loading	CA	CR	AVE	INN VIF
<b>Perceived Enjoyment (PE)</b>	I enjoy following this food influencer. (PE1)	0.852	0.814	0.890	0.730	2.259
	I have fun with this food influencer.” (PE2)	0.898				
	Using the food influencer’s page is pleasant. (PE3)	0.811				
<b>Perceived Professionalism (PP)</b>	In the promotional (advertisement) posts, this food influencer provides enough product information and description. (PP1)	0.833	0.763	0.863	0.678	2.287
	I use this food influencer’s posts as a source of information. (PP2)	0.826				
	The information provided on this food influencer’s posts is informative.(PP3)	0.811				
<b>Perceived Credibility (PC)</b>	I think this food influencer is informed about food.(PC1)	0.787	0.754	0.844	0.576	1.616
	I perceive the food influencer have a sincere interest in food. (PC2)	0.722				
	This food influencer respects my evaluations. (PC3)	0.757				
	I think the food influencer is trustworthy. (PC4)	0.768				
<b>Engagement with the influencer (EI)</b>	I spend a lot of time on this food influencers page/handle.(EI1)	0.847	0.903	0.932	0.775	2.254

**Fornell-Larcker criterion**

In line with Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria for discriminant validity, all items differentiated among the constructs.

**Table III: The Fornell-Larcker criterion results**

	BINT	EINF	PCRED	PENJ	PPROF
<b>BINT</b>	<b>0.885</b>				
<b>EINF</b>	0.678	<b>0.880</b>			
<b>PCRED</b>	0.508	0.575	<b>0.759</b>		
<b>PENJ</b>	0.683	0.663	0.496	<b>0.854</b>	
<b>PPROF</b>	0.728	0.653	0.539	0.689	<b>0.824</b>

## Structural model assessment

According to Muhammad (2017) the structural model represents how the constructs in the study relate to one another. Structural model analysis cannot proceed until the collinearity issue is fixed. The structural model was evaluated using the following metrics: effect size (F2), which describes the impact of each external construct on the endogenous construct; predictive relevance (Q2), which indicates out-of-sample prediction power; and coefficient of determination (R2), which indicates in-sample prediction power (Hair Jr et al., 2017). The testing hypotheses were evaluated based on the path coefficients' size, sign, and significance, as reported by Hair Jr et al. (2017) and Fornell & Larcker (1981b).

## Direct Relationships

The outcomes of applying a PLS SEM method and bootstrapping direct relationship technique are shown in the above table. Relevant measures like the original sample means, standard deviation, t-statistics, and p-values included in the analysis. The results show that the hypothesis H1 has been accepted, as suggested by (t-value 4.956) and (p-value 0.000). The hypothesis H2 has been also accepted, as (t-value 3.816) and (p-value 0.000). The hypothesis H3 has been accepted with the (t-value 5.275) and (p-value 0.000). Whereas hypothesis H4 with beta coefficient (0.250), t-value (3.831), and p-value (0.000) are accepted. In hypothesis H5 the data clearly shows a positive relationship with the values of original sample 0.233, t-value of 3.099, and p-value of 0.002. Hypothesis H6 has also been accepted because of (t-value 5.457) and (p-value 0.000). It means that all of these have been positive relationships because all these hypotheses are accepted. In hypothesis H7, the finding shows that the perceived credibility has very weak and non-significant effect on behavioral intention with the value 0.042, t value 0.860 and p value 0.390. Therefore, it has been not accepted.

**Table IV: The Results of Direct Relationships**

Hypothesis	Relationships	Original Sample(O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
H1	penj -> einf	0.346	0.349	0.070	4.956	0.000
H2	pprof -> einf	0.277	0.277	0.073	3.816	0.000
H3	pcrred -> einf	0.254	0.253	0.048	5.275	0.000
H4	einf -> bint	0.250	0.249	0.065	3.831	0.000
H5	penj -> bint	0.233	0.230	0.075	3.099	0.002
H6	pprof -> bint	0.382	0.384	0.070	5.457	0.000
H7	pcrred -> bint	0.042	0.044	0.049	0.860	0.390

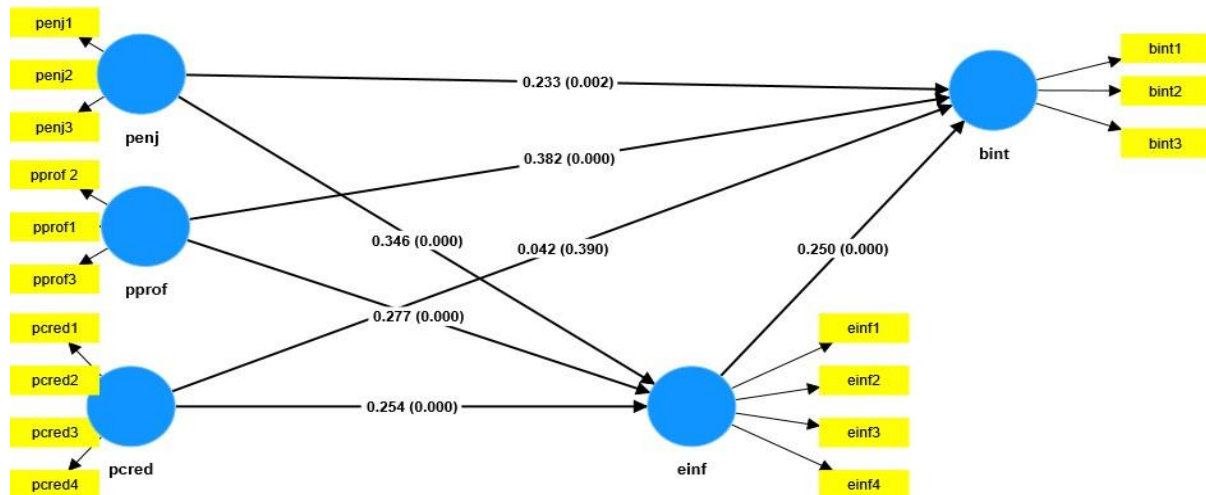


Figure 2: Representing results of PLS-SEM

## Mediation

Hypothesis H8a shows the indirect relationship mediated by engagement with influencers between behavioral intention and perceived enjoyment. A beta value of 0.087, t value 2.998 and p value 0.003 indicates a positive relationship, showing higher levels of perceived enjoyment and behavior intention in a positive direction. In hypothesis H8b the results, (t-value 2.525, p-value 0.012) show the strong indirect effect that engagement with influencers has on perceived professionalism and behavioral intention. Hypothesis H8c also shows the positive relationship with original sample value 0.064, t value 3.319 and p value 0.001 between perceived credibility and behavioral intention which mediated by engagement with influencer. All these hypothesis H8a, H8b and H8c are accepted.

Table 5: The Mediation Outcome

Hypothesis	Relations		Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
H8a	penj einf bint	-> -> ->	0.087	0.087	0.029	2.998	0.003
H8b	pprof einf bint	-> -> ->	0.069	0.070	0.027	2.525	0.012
H8c	pcred einf bint	-> -> ->	0.064	0.063	0.019	3.319	0.001

## Discussion

This research aimed to significantly advance previous findings about the association between food influencers and consumer behavior. Influencer engagement and behavioral intention have studied in relation to perceived enjoyment, professionalism, and credibility. The research findings confirm that influencer engagement influenced by credibility and enjoyment. These findings align with prior studies demonstrating how an influencer can cultivate followers' attachment by offering hedonic gratifications or perceived delight (Magno, 2017; Xu et al., 2012).

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

### Conclusion

From a theoretical point of view, the study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the results of food influencers on consumer decision-making processes by jointly analyzing several key factors that may affect a person's participation in the post and their behavioral responses. *First*, the findings support earlier studies claiming that social media posts are powerful communication tools that trigger customer behavioral reactions. *Second*, the study examines how consumers understand food influencers beyond theoretical frameworks, focusing on how perceived enjoyment, credibility, and professionalism affect influencer engagement with the food industry. Third, our results confirm that influencer's content on social media is the key to forming an active community of followers. The influencers who post engaging and entertaining content and their followers form emotional bonds with them. *Third*, our results confirm the idea that the development of an active social media community is dependent on the emotional bond with followers based on credibility (Ladhari et al. (2020), and perceived enjoyment (Shiau & Luo, 2013).

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) states that food influencer qualities, including perceived enjoyment, perceived professionalism, and perceived credibility, have a major impact on customer behavioral intentions toward food businesses. The attributes of food influencers are linked to the wide variety of consumer satisfaction, which in turn impacts how consumers view and behave towards the advertised food brands. UGT's focus on entertainment and emotional gratification is consistent with perceived enjoyment. The primary platforms for food marketing through influencers are TikTok and Instagram. Previous researchers have focused on Instagram, and our initial study included both TikTok and Instagram.

Research holds important value for marketing and brand management. Social media has changed the way consumers engage with food brands. Food influencers are now crucial in influencing the consumer behavior of a new generation, and food brands can benefit from their power. To ensure that their food influencer followers are in line with their target market, brands should examine their behavioral and demographic characteristics ahead of time. They must then select suitable influencers whose content style, follower interaction, and specialty focus match the requirements of their target audience.

The most key factor influencing consumer behavior is credibility. A food influencer's marketing success depends on credibility; therefore, managers must ensure their relationships are based on sincerity and trust. Establishing credibility among influencers is essential for building consumer trust in the food brand. This trustworthiness and credibility may result from the food influencer's knowledge, honesty, and confidence about his or her niche or specialty.

From a managerial perspective, food influencers, businesses, and destination marketers can benefit from these findings' strategic recommendations. To enhance brand awareness and customer engagement, food brand managers must recognize the significance of influencer marketing as a strategic tool. Maintaining a brand's reputation and perceived quality in influencer content material requires professionalism. Managers must collaborate with the influencers to ensure that food influencer's content satisfies strict requirements for quality. The influencers must align with the brand's vision and values. The efficacy of food influencer marketing depends on authenticity; therefore, managers must guarantee that their relationships are based on honesty and trust. The influencers must align with the brand's mission and values. The success of food influencer marketing primarily hinges on authenticity, so managers must ensure that their connections are founded on sincerity and trust.

### **Limitations and future research directions**

This study reveals that food influencers can impact readers' dietary choices. This study shows food influencers can affect product consumption. This article is one of the few to examine influencer engagement and behavioral intentions, but it has limitations. To clarify, this study's findings and limitations suggest more research avenues. *First*, the theoretical basis of this study is strong, and we assume that the findings will be valuable for the influencer marketing sectors. Initially, we surveyed Instagram followers using a cross-sectional approach. Most of our respondents can be categorized as "in a relationship" because they have followed the food influencers for a specific time. *Second*, there are some significant limitations to consider. One main drawback is the possibility of authenticity problems; when food influencers gain popularity, some may favor sponsored collaborations above sincere recommendations, damaging followers' faith. Furthermore, it can be difficult for businesses to maintain continuous food influencer connections and engagement, given the rapid change in the social media market and customer preferences.

This study followed previous research (Casaló et al., 2020; Chia et al., 2021; Masuda et al., 2022; Ayyub et al., 2021). The process of developing a relationship between influencer-follower involves multiple stages: pre-following, where users must choose who and what to follow; early-following, where users follow but are not sure of the information they receive or of the food influencer's expectations; and late-following when users begin to lose interest, get bored, and become uninterested. This study surveyed food influencers on TikTok and Instagram followers, but food influencers are also present on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media sites. The attributes of food influencers are associated with various kinds of consumer satisfaction, which subsequently impacts how consumers view and behave towards the advertised food brands.

Cross-platform variances and platform-dependent factors may be found in future research. Further research should investigate our findings with different culinary influencers and on multiple social media platforms to improve portability.

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